

Tips for a Green Holiday

No matter what you celebrate, the holiday season is a time for family, friends, and merriment. This time of year involves a lot of shopping and gift-giving, but before you make your shopping list, take into account the realities of our changing environment.

You've heard a lot of buzz about "going green" and "living green." Living a green lifestyle means being conscious of the energy used in producing and consuming everyday products and making an effort to reduce waste when possible. You don't have to track your carbon footprint on a daily basis to be green; small changes can have a big environmental impact. (A carbon footprint is a measure of the quantity of greenhouse gases emitted by one entity (person, company, country), based on the activities they take part in and the things they consume.)

The holidays are the perfect time to start thinking greener. According to a report from Use Less Stuff, Americans throw away 25% more waste between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day than any other time of year.

Here are 4 ways to think green this holiday season:

1. Holiday Cards

This is a very easy way to do your part for the environment. Look for holiday cards printed on recycled paper and try to avoid the ones with lots of embellishment (foil coatings, shiny stuff, etc.). Those usually can't be recycled. You may want to reconsider buying holiday cards at all. Try sending e-cards to friends and family as an alternative to printed cards. (Remember you can recycle a lot at the Boone County Recycling Center which is located at 11th & Division Street in Boone.)

2. Christmas Tree

Getting a tree for the house? If you opt for an artificial tree, you can store it afterward and use it again next year. If you choose to get a real tree, get a live one that can be planted at the end of the season or make sure you have your cut tree composted after the holidays. (Contact the Boone County Landfill about Christmas tree recycling.)



3. Lights

Traditional holiday string lighting uses a lot of energy and there are some technical drawbacks. For example, if one light in a strand goes out, so do all the others. Solve both problems by opting for LED holiday lights instead. LED lights use anywhere from 90% to 95% less energy than traditional bulbs and can last a lot longer overall. Plus, even if one of the LED lights burns out the others will stay lit. Whichever type of lighting you use, reduce your energy consumption—and your electric bill—by turning off the lights before you go to bed.

4. Wrapping Paper

For your gift wrapping this holiday season, look for wrapping paper made from recycled materials or buy paper that doesn't have glossy foil or metallic coating—just like holiday cards, that type of wrapping paper is harder to recycle. If you really want to go green, try getting creative and use alternatives: the comic section of the newspaper, old movie posters, fold-outs from magazines, and even maps can be used to wrap gifts. Have the kids decorate brown paper grocery bags to use as wrapping paper—they'll have a blast and you'll be reducing waste. Another option is to use fabric gift bags, which are reusable. Or if you're an avid shopper, make a unique and fashionable statement by digging into your collection of paper shopping bags and using them to wrap gifts.



It's easy to be environmentally conscious this holiday season—small changes make a big difference. Just keep an eye out for recycled materials and energy efficient products, and you'll start the new year off with a clean green conscience.

Happy Green Holidays

from Keep Boone County Beautiful -

Boone County Landfill - Boone County Recycling Center!